

Athenian News :

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Dunton's Oracle.From **Saturday** May the 6th, to **Tuesday** May the 9th, 1710.

The Distracted-Post, or a new Bedlam erected for the Cure of Mad Folks; to be continu'd 'till all the Lunaticks are describ'd.

Some have been too nice and curious in searching for the Cause of Distraction, and themselves have grown Philosophically mad, in the Midst of their Enquiries: Some have discover'd the Original among the Stars; and tell us, That Distraction is deriv'd from their different Aspects, and that they've some governing Influence on the Organs of the Human System. One wou'd think, tho' the Aspects had some Malignancy in their Looks, that they were foreign to the Business, and the rational World a little out of their Reach. 'Tis true, the Mind is nearly ally'd to Matter, and the Body receives different Impressions from the various Temperature of the Air and Climate we live in; yet I judge, 'tis something unphilosophical to assign a single Cause in this Case, which must certainly be as different as the Complexions of the Persons. I shan't be dogmatical upon this Point; yet I think the Passions may more reasonably be assign'd as the Source of Madness, and none of the Affections stand so fair for the Mischief, as those of Fear and Love; the former, when its Object gives such violent Impressions, that the apprehensive Faculty is disorder'd; the latter, when it labours either under Disappointment or Despair; then the Person concludes, that Happiness is beyond his Reach; and the very Thought of this, sets him a raving. Various other Causes may joyn their Force in this Matter, as Dreams, Spectres, and frightful Visions; these may be so cunningly adjust'd by Satan, that they shall work with Vehemence on the Fancy, influence and alarm the Passions, and disorder the Person: The Instance we observe from, strengthens the Supposition; the Voice of *Bedlam* makes for us, and almost universal Observation enforces what we've now advanc'd. Some Persons form wrong Notions of the Christian Religion, as tho' its Precepts were sour and severe, and its Duties impracticable; hence their Doubts and Scruples overspread their Reason, and they run distracted. As for the Affairs of Love, wou'd not Persons over-rate the Creature, and not fix their last Happiness where God

ne'er design'd it, a Disappointment wou'd be supported with greater Ease, and a Man might keep his Temper and his Hopes, tho' his Desires and Designs were baulk'd. The Publick may shortly expect a Piece of Advice upon this Head from *John Dunton*, if more important Business prevent it not. To return to the Point, Reason is the most excellent and leading Faculty of the Human Mind, and 'tis of vast Moment to secure and improve it. Men should be cautious how they indulge their Melancholy, and engage their Affections; the Descent is easy, but 'tis difficult to recover one's Ground, and disentangle one's self with Advantage: Thousands have miscarry'd in the Enterprize, and few have made their Retreat without Loss.

There are few that hold their Opinions by Arguments, and dry Reasonings, but by Congruity to the Understanding, and consequently by Relish in the Affections; so that seldom any thing cures our intellectual Diseases thoroughly, but what changes these. This I dare affirm, that the free, experimental Philosophy will do to Purpose, by giving the Mind another Tincture, and introducing a sounder Habit, which by Degrees will at last absolutely repel all the little Malignities, and settle it in a strong and Manly Temperament, that will master and cast out idle Dotages, and effeminate Madnes.

The Truth is, This World is a vey *Bedlam*, and he that would cure Madmen, must not attempt by reasoning, or endeavour to shew the Absurdity of their Conceits; but such a Course must be taken, as may restore the Mind to a right *Craze*, and that when 'tis effected, will reduce and rectify the Extravagances of the distemper'd Brain, which Disputes and Oppositions will but enflame and make worse. Thus for Instance, when frantick Persons are fond of Feathers, and mightily taken with the Employment of picking Straws, 'twould signify very little to represent to them the Vanity of the Objects of their Delights; and when the *Melancholick* was afraid to sit down, for Fear of being broken, supposing himself made of Glass, it had been to little Purpose to have declar'd to him the Ridiculousness of his Fears; the Disposition of the Head was to be alter'd, before the particular Phrenzy could be cur'd.

'Tis too evident how just this is in the Application to the present Age: Superstitious Fondness and Fears are a real Degree of Madness. And tho' I cannot say that Philosophy must be the only Catholick Way of Cure,

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(for of this the far greatest Part of Men are absolutely incapable) yet this I do, that 'tis a Remedy for those that are strong enough to take it: And the rest must be help'd by that which changeth the Genius, which cannot ordinarily be done by any thing that opposeth the particular Fancy. Strange Things may be effected by no diviner a Cause than a strong Fancy impregnated by heated Melancholy; for this sometimes warms the Brain to a Degree that makes it very active and imaginative, full of odd Thoughts, and unexpected Suggestions; so that if the Temper determine the Imagination to Religion, it flies at high Things, at Interpretations of dark and prophetick Scriptures; at Predictions of future Events and mysterious Discoveries, which the Man expresseth fluently and boldly, with a peculiar and pathetic Eloquence; and now these Pregnances being not ordinary, but much beyond the usual Tone, and Temper of the Enthusiast; and he having heard great Things of the Spirit's immediate Motions and Inspirations, cannot well fail of believing himself inspir'd, and of entitling all the Excursions of his Fancy (or Madness) to the immediate Actings of the Holy Ghost: Which Thoughts, by the Help of natural Pride, and Self-love, will work also exceedingly upon the heightened Affections, and they upon the Body so far as to cast it sometimes into Raptures, Extasies, and Delinquiums of Sense, in which every Dream is taken for a Prophecy, every Image of the Fancy for a Vision, and all the Glarings of the Imagination for new Lights and Revelations.

Thus have our modern Prophets been inspir'd, who yet are not to be reckon'd hypocritical Impostors, for they infinitely believe themselves, and the Strength of their highly invigorated Fancies shuts out the sober Light of Reason that should disabuse them, as Sleep doth that of our external Senses in our Dreams: And which is worse, the silly People that understand not Nature, but are apt to take every thing that is vehement to be sacred, are easily deceiv'd into the Belief of those Pretensions; and thus Diseases and Madness have been worship'd for Religion. This Account the Philosophy of Human Nature gives of that by which the World hath been so sadly abus'd.

And when we cast our Eyes abroad into the wide World, we see that those glorious Things are no more than what hath been done by the extatick Priests of the Heathen Oracles, and the Madmen of all Religions; by Sibils, Lunatics, Poets, Dreamers, and abreptitious Persons of all Sorts: And we see daily to what Degrees of Elevation and Madness Excess of drinking will heighten the Brain, making some witty, nimble, and eloquent, much beyond the ordinary Size of their Parts and Ingenuity, and enclining others to be hugely devout, who usually have no great Sense of Religion; as I knew one who would pray rapturously when he was drunk, but at other Times was a moping Sot, and could scarce speak Sense.

Thus also some Kinds of Madness, Diseases, Accidents, Peculiarities of Temper, and other natural Things that heat the Brain, fill Men with high, surprizing Concoits about Religion, and furnish them with fervid Devotion, great Readiness of Expression, and unexpected Applications of Scripture to their crazy Concoits: I say, the experimental Philosophy of our Natures informs us that all this is common in Alienations, and Singularities

of Mind and Complexion. And they were remarkable in the Prophets of the Heathen, and the Priest whom St. *Austin* knew, that would whine himself into an Extasy: In the wonderful Discourses of the *American* Bishop, that said he was the Holy Ghost, and the canting Fluency of the *German* Enthusiasts, some of whose Imaginations were as mad and extravagant; of such Instances I might make up a much larger Catalogue, if I should descend to our Domestick Lunatics, but their Temper is well known, and therefore I only add this more,

"That I have often met with a poor Woman in *Warwick-shire*, whose habitual Conceit it was, that she was Mother of God, and of all Things living: I was wont to personate a Kind of Compliance to her Fancy, and a modest Desire to be further inform'd about it; which Gentleness drew from her so many odd Fetches of Discourse, such Applications of Scripture, and such wonderful References to Things, in which she was never instructed, that look'd like Scraps taken out of *Hobbs* and *Epicurus*, that I have been much amaz'd at her Talk: And yet when I diverted her to any thing else of ordinary Matters, she spoke usually with as much Sobriety and cold Discretion, as could well be expected from a mad Woman, nor did she use to be extravagant in any thing but about that particular Imagination; which Instance, among many others I might produce, very much confirms me in the Truth of that Observation of those Philosophers who have given us the best Light into the Enthusiastick Temper, viz. *That there is a Sort of Madness which takes Men in some particular Things, when they are sound in others: Which one Proposition will afford a good Account of many of the Phaenomena of Enthusiasm; and shews that the Extravagants among us may be really distracted in the Affairs of Religion, tho' their Brains are untouch'd in other Matters.*

"Thus a Philosophical Use of Observation, and the Knowledge of the Human Nature by it, helps us to distinguish between the Effects of the adorable Spirit, and those of an hot, mad, distemper'd Fancy; which is no small Advantage for the securing the Purity, Honour, and all the Interests of Religion.

Thus far Mr. *Glanvil*; to which I shall add,

I know not how true that Light is by which he discover'd all the World is mad, but by all the Light I have it appears true to me; for tho' *Solomon* brands Sinners with the Name of Fool, the Wit and Understanding of Man is now improv'd to such a Height he shews nothing of the dull Thoughtlessness of a Fool in any of his Actions, but rather all the cunning Passion and Rage of Madmen acting violently, but upon mistaken Principles. All the most active Men, that play the most considerable Parts on the Stage of this World, are generally the best furnish'd with passionate Desires, Pride, Ambition and Covetousness; all which are admirable Ingredients to procure Madness, as may be seen by the Effects; for what can be a greater Madness, than to mistake one's own true Interest, in what relates both to their temporal and eternal Happiness, while they give themselves up to the blind Conduct of those mad Passions that are always tempting and perswading 'em to pursue their own Ruin with a Pleasure and Delight equal to that any body takes in firing a House, or drowning a Child, or doing any daring Mischief to themselves or others? And that which makes Men act so contrary to a natural Principle of Self-

Self-preservation, must needs be the violent Impression of abused Fancy. Happy were it for such Persons if their Mad-ness were so fix'd, that with Chains, and other Helps, the many Mischiefs they do themselves and others might be prevented, which is otherwise impossible; for who can prevent what can't be foreseen? for how can one know how far an Object will operate, toward distracting any Man, 'till the Effect shews it? which makes the general Mad-ness that possesses all Mankind, the most deplorable, because the most without Remedy, for every thing in the World contributes towards making him mad, but nothing to the curing him; so that quitting the World must recover him, if any thing. If the World is the largest *Bedlam* 'tis not the best, for tho' we are all mad, yet some are more harmless than others, and they are the Persons that come the ofteneft by the worst in this great *Bedlam*, where there are no sober Persons to be found, fit to take a proper Care of those that are mad, as in the lesser *Bedlam* there are. 'Tis true, we have all our Intervals, wherein we see the Madness of others Actions, and they again of ours; but then 'tis the greatest Crime we can commit against Civility and good Breeding, to make the least Mention in Discourse of the Disease, or any necessary Remedy. Then since we are all mad enough to think it a pleasant World with all its Mad-ness, let us content our selves to lay our Madness upon something or other, than upon starving in Midst of Plenty, enough to make any Man mad; and I my Madness upon the Offence I have taken at *M. Smith*, Author of the *British Apollo*, who by his Interloping made himself the most contemptible of all Scriblers; which to consider is enough to make *M* — his Printer mad; and what Matter who says he is stark mad for printing the *British Apollo*, when he can tell them again he thinks 'em madder for saying so? And should any Person say of me I am stark mad, for troubling my self to write what no body cares to read, I have this Answer ready for 'em; perhaps those Persons spend their Time as madly.

I don't see but all mad Folks are troublesome to some body or other; so are they, and so am I.

Then suppose I was stark mad, yet Madness is not such a Discredit as the Age goes; for the whole World is one great *Bedlam*, and every Man in it is stark mad. — *There was a mad Man and he had a mad Wife.* — For, when the Woman saw that the Tree was good for Food, and a Tree to be desired to make one wife, she was so mad (tho' commanded to the contrary by God himself) as to take of the Fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her Husband with her, and he too was so mad as to eat; and ever since all *Adam's* Children have been stark mad. — Then, Reader, bespeak Quarters in *Bedlam*, and *D* — — — — — and *S* — — — — — will pick Straws near you, tho' I don't see why you should covet a particular *Bedlam*, for, Reader, to speak Truth, you and I, and every body else, are in *Bedlam* already; (strange, that we should be so mad as not to know where we are!) for what is all the World but one great Mad-house? — *Stertinius* the Stoick was of this Opinion, for he held all the World was mad. What is Ambition, Lust, or Luxury, but Madness? and those reign every where. Too much Learning makes some mad: The Parson is mad when they steal his Tithes, and the Physitian is mad when he gets no Fees. Your Lawyer trots and writes as if he were mad, he talks wildly, no Man is able to endure his Terms, and his Client is madder than he. Your Cit that marries a

fair Wife and leaves her at Home, is mad. Your Countier is mad to take up Silks and Velvets on Tick for his Miss, and your Citizen is mad to trust him. — Besides mad Lords, what do you think of Ladies? At sometimes of the Moon you may spell them by their Name, *Mad-am*. Your Justice of Peace is sometimes mad too, for when he may see well enough, he will suffer any Man to put out his Eyes with a Bribe: And *Oldham* says that all Poets are mad. —

*Deaf to all Means which might most proper seem
Towards their Cure, they run stark mad in Rhime.*

Not a Man, or Woman, but in the soft Minute is mad, mad! Your Lovers they are stark staring mad, and therefore one in *Bedlam* being ask'd why he did not marry, said *he was not so mad yet*. How many mad Virgins are now in *Bedlam* roaring (or picking Straws) for Love? But I need not enlarge, for the Play call'd the *Mad Lover* is acted daily. — And then for your Challenges they are the maddest Things in the World. What a Madness is every Duel? (especially if the Duel was for a Where) for 'tis but trying which of the Two shall go first to the Devil. — Your very Usurers too are mad, that when they have enough, grow poor by getting Riches, and will pawn their very Souls for Six-pence. — Our Philosophers (with all their Gravity) are a Parcel of Madmen, for one knows nothing, dares not aver he sees, lives, goes, or feels; another says there is no present Time, and that one Man to Day and to Morrow is not the same Man, so that he that Yesterday ow'd Money, to Day owes none: (Would that Philosophy wou'd hold good by Law!) So that you see, Reader, the whole World is one great *Bedlam*, and that every Man in it is stark mad; and I cou'd prove that this Madness appears in as many Instances as there are Men and Women to be found in the World. — I could also prove that other Creatures, as well as Man, are as mad as a *March-bare*; but it's needless to prove what every Man finds to be true. — To conclude, Reader, I ask no Pardon for any thing I have now spoke, for (if we all live in *Bedlam*) you would be mad indeed if you took any thing amiss from a mad Author: But, Reader, don't be so conceited to think I'm singular, for this *Distracted-Post* is erected for the Cure of mad Folks, and I resolve to continue it 'till I have prov'd all the World (except it be Men of moderate Principles) to be stark mad; and the Epicure is the first that shall lead the Ring of this mad Crew, and therefore expect to see him in my next *Mad, or Distracted-Post*.

The Casuistical-Post, or Athenian Mercury.

Quest. *Why did Jesus Christ weep for Lazarus, and not for John Baptist?*

Ans. Several Causes are alledg'd of the Tears Christ shed upon *Lazarus's* Grave; but if it was for the Death of a Man whom he lov'd, why did he not weep for the Death of such a Friend, yea, of such a Prophet, who died for the Truth, viz. *John Baptist*? If it was in general for the Misery of Mankind, which Death swallows down every Day, whence is it that Jesus Christ wept not for the Two other Dead he had rais'd before? If he wept

wept because *Lazarus* was returning to the Miseries incident to this Life, had he not the same Subject at the Resurrection of the others? If he wept out of Compassion towards those who were taking on for the Death of *Lazarus*, why did he not weep, when he saw a poor Widow, a Mother, lamenting for the Death of her only Son, the young Man of *Naim*, whom she accompany'd to the Grave?

It's very certain, that Christ had a great Tenderness for us, but he hath kept in his Tears to the drawing near of his last Sufferings. Therein, as well as in most of his Actions, several Degrees are to be observ'd, near one to the other, and in particular this: Before he did sweat Blood, which happen'd the Day before his Death, he express'd his Sorrowfulness by a much less violent Demonstration, viz. by weeping on *Lazarus* and on *Jerusalem*. It was convenient he should shed Tears, before he should shed his Blood; there was but a few Days Difference between both: For we don't read that he ever wept before. Altho' his whole Life was a continual Series of Sorrows, yet they increas'd more and more, as his Death was drawing nearer and nearer; and at last they united and centred all together, caus'd the Tears to gush out, which he had still restrain'd during his former Sufferings. In a Word, he was nearer to his last and more extream Sufferings, when he went towards *Lazarus's* Sepulchre, than when he heard of *John Baptist's* Death.

Q. How did Leah, being dead, do Homage unto Joseph?

A. In Joseph's Dream, the Moon, that did Homage to him, signify'd his Mother, as Jacob did interpret it, Gen. 37. it could not be *Rachael*, for she was dead before this Dream happen'd; nor *Leah*, for she dy'd before Jacob went to Joseph into Egypt, Gen. 49. 31. How then, being dead, did she Homage unto Joseph? In the Persons of her Children. *Leah*, who held the Place of a Mother to Joseph, when this Dream happen'd, and who dy'd before the fulfilling of it, did nevertheless serve to fulfil it: Altho' she was dead, she bow'd before Joseph, she spake, she pray'd him to give her Food; the Submissions and Requests which her Children made to Joseph, were of Leah her self represented in her Children. So *Rachael's* being dead many Ages before, did bewail her Children, even those who were born 1660 Years after her Death, Mar. 2.

Q. Wherefore hath God often employ'd one Angel alone to do great Matters, and hath often sent many Angels together only to deliver a Message?

Ans. One Angel alone hath been able to open the Iron Gates, and to cause the Chains of the Prisoners to fall off, and to set those at Liberty, such as were there most strictly kept, Acts 5. 19. and 12. 4, &c. One Angel alone was able in one Night to slay 185000 Men. One Angel alone was able in Three Days to cause 70000 Men to die of the Pestilence. One Angel could exterminate all the First-born of Egypt, in the Space of one Hour. Why did God employ one Angel only on each of these great Exploits, when as many were sent together only to speak a Word? Must there be a Company of Three Angels to go and tell Abraham, he shall have a Son by Sarah? Were Two Angels necessary to denounce that Christ was risen? Was not one Angel sufficient, without joyning to him another, to tell the Apostles that

Christ shall come down again from Heaven, where they had seen him go up? Luk. 24. 24. Acts 1. 10.

But we ought to consider, that in these Occurrences the Angels were sent, not only as Messengers, but as Witnesses of the Word they were sent to deliver; they were to attest that it came from the Mouth of God. Altho' his Truths need not the Testimony of the Creatures, yet the Weakness of Men hath Need of it; especially when the Things in Question are beyond Human Belief; as was the Birth of *Isaac*, the Resurrection of Christ, and his Second Coming. Thus, to help the Incredulity of Men, and for a greater Confirmation of the Truth, God hath been pleas'd his Word should be sometimes in the Mouth of Two or Three Angels, as of so many Witnesses; as amongst Men they do give Belief unto Two or Three Witnesses that are unrepachable, and conformable in their Depositions.

Q. Who are the Three Men mention'd in Scripture, who knew punctually, and from Heaven, the Place where they should die?

A. Aaron, Moses, and Jesus Christ, had that Foreknowledge, no other ever had it. A Man may guess of his fatal Place, but cannot be sure of it, tho' he were already upon the Scaffold. How many Accidents have interven'd betwixt the Neck and the Sword? Only these Three, the first Priest in Israel, the first Leader of that People, and the First-born amongst the Dead, have been certain of the Place where they should die; yet with this Difference, Aaron and Moses knew not the Place of their Death but some few Hours, or few Days before, but Jesus Christ knew afar off the Place of his Death, Numb. 20. 25. Deut. 32. 49. Luk. 13. 33. It is remarkable, that at the Transfiguration of our Lord, Moses was one of the Two that did speak of the Place where he was to die, Luk. 9. 31. The Israelites, who murmur'd at the Report of the Spies, were condemn'd to die in the Wilderness, Numb. 14. 29. but the Wilderness was very large, and they wandred there a long Time afterwards from Place to Place, so that none of them could know the particular Place where he was to die.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T S.

* * * The Bull-baiting, or Sach—ll dress'd up in Fire-works, lately brought over from the Bear-Garden in Southwark, and expos'd for the Diversion of the Citizens of London, at Six pence a-piece. By John Dunton, Author of the Answer to Dr. K—net, entitl'd The Hazard of a Death-Bed-Repentance; being Remarks on a scandalous Sermon bellow'd out at St. Paul's on the Fifth of November last, before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen, by Dr. Sach—ll. Dedicated to the Right Honourable Sir Samuel Garrard, Bar. Lord-Mayor of the City of London. Price 6d.

+ + + The Christian's Gazette, or News chiefly respecting the Invisible World; being a Pacquet for the pious Virtuosi on Subjects never started before. Written by John Dunton, Author of the Essay entitl'd The Hazard of a Death-Bed-Repentance. Price 1s.

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